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CONCEPT PAPER

This estimate assesses the possible content, likelihood and implications of Soviet initiatives--either as a negotiation proposal or a unilateral initiative--to curtail conventional arms.

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Several convergent circumstances may have placed the Soviets in a position where significant unilateral conventional arms reductions or proposals for mutual reductions will serve their national interest and place the US in a reactive posture:

- The massive procurement of Soviet armaments from the early 1970s to the 1980s has provided a modernized combined arms force which is probably larger than that required by the NATO "threat."
- Even highly asymmetrical reductions--3:1 or 4:1 in NATO's favor--could weaken NATO without significantly diminishing Warsaw Pact strength..
- Retention of obsolescent arms provides a huge Soviet/Warsaw Pact inventory of relatively less effective, man-intensive weaponry ripe for retirement.
- The Soviet economy is not responding to perestroyka, leading Gorbachev to seek additional resources from other sectors of the economy, particularly defense.
- Perestroyka will create unprecedented demands for skilled Slavic technicians coincident with a declining manpower pool.
- Gorbachev's public relations agenda seeks to portray a less threatening, more accommodating, less militarized Soviet Union.
- The recent INF agreement and publicity regarding possible 50 percent cuts in strategic arms have led to heightened expectations among the Western public that conventional cuts are in the offing.

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- ° There is a popular perception within NATO that defense spending should be reduced.
- ° There is relatively little agreement within NATO as to a common position or a strategy for achieving conventional arms reductions.
- ° The upcoming US election campaign and the subsequent government transition will increase US difficulties in responding to a Soviet initiative and complicate negotiations with NATO allies.

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The foregoing appear to offer the Soviet leadership the opportunity to seize the initiative in conventional arms control at relatively low cost. Proposals for deep mutual conventional arms cuts could put pressure on a new US administration to agree to proposals which might erode the conventional imbalance even further in the Soviets' favor in Central Europe. Unilateral Soviet initiatives could provide the Soviets with a significant propaganda coup. This estimate, outlining possible Soviet initiatives, their effect on the military balance, and probable allied reaction, would enable US policymakers to consider alternative responses to a range of possible major actions by the Soviets in conventional arms control.

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The premise of this estimate is highly speculative and will require examination of military, economic, and political issues from both the Soviet and NATO view. In addition to capitalizing on current research available, we intend to bring experts together for "brainstorming" sessions to consider various key issues. A July publication is desired.

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KEY QUESTIONS

- I. What is the incentive--political (internal and external), economic or military--for the Soviets to propose significant conventional arms control initiatives?
- II. What are the internal political dynamics which might encourage or impede Soviet arms control initiatives?
- III. What significant cuts might the Soviets propose/unilaterally take, and what would the results be on the military balance? What are the likelihoods of the various initiatives and why?
- IV. How much warning of a Soviet decision/announcement might we expect?
- V. What are likely reactions of NATO/other Allies of the US to possible Soviet initiatives?

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OUTLINE

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- I. Soviet Incentives
 - °Past Soviet arms control initiatives
 - °Soviet external political objectives
 - °Soviet economic requirements
 - °Soviet internal political dynamics
 - °East/West military balance
- II. Possible Soviet Conventional Arms Reduction Initiatives and their Impact on the Military Balance (representative examples of initiatives shown here; others will be developed during research):
 - °Early Retirement of Equipment/Demobilization of Personnel
 - °Reductions in Units
 - Restructuring
 - °Elimination/Reduction of Particular Weapons Systems
 - *Operational Restrictions*
- III Likelihood of Soviet Initiatives (above)
- VI. Warning
- V. Overall Implications for NATO and US

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